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## SUCCESS STORY

### School Earthquake Safety Program Saves Lives in Nepal

**USAID support for NSET's School Earthquake Safety Program has strengthened school buildings and increased earthquake preparedness among teachers, students, and parents.**



Photos courtesy of NSET

*Pictured above is a retrofitted high school building that survived the earthquake and served as an emergency shelter for 500 community members. Pictured below is a non-retrofitted high school that collapsed during the earthquake.*



USAID has supported the National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET) since 1997 to implement the School Earthquake Safety Program (SESP), which aims to strengthen school buildings and raise earthquake safety awareness among teachers, students, and parents in Nepal. Prior to the magnitude 7.8 earthquake that struck less than 50 miles from the capital city of Kathmandu in April 2015, NSET had retrofitted 115 schools, primarily in the Kathmandu Valley, to withstand earthquake shaking. During the earthquake, none of the retrofitted schools collapsed.

Damage assessments conducted by the Government of Nepal Department of Education (DoE) revealed that more than 27,000 public school classrooms were completely destroyed during the April 2015 earthquake, while an additional 26,000 classrooms sustained substantial damage. In many earthquake-affected communities, retrofitted schools were among the few structures that did not sustain significant damage. Following the earthquake, the schools served as emergency shelters and humanitarian distribution points since communities and relief agencies trusted the structural integrity of the modified buildings. Local residents and educators expressed gratitude for the safe space, particularly during the numerous aftershocks experienced in the weeks following the initial earthquake.

Due to the success of SESP and NSET's consistent advocacy efforts, the DoE has institutionalized NSET's retrofitting methods. NSET has provided technical support to the DoE for planning, budgeting, and implementing SESP activities, targeting 260 public schools in the Kathmandu Valley.

NSET also provides training to educate students and teachers about ways to safely respond during earthquakes. For example, students are taught to quickly "drop, cover, and hold on" when an earthquake strikes. Students then carry their knowledge and skills home to share with their families, further disseminating earthquake awareness.

SESP is a component of NSET's Building Code Implementation Plan in Nepal (BCIPN) program, which is designed to enhance the capacity of municipal governments to develop and administer building permits and control systems to reduce the vulnerability of buildings to earthquake shaking. To date, NSET has worked with more than 200 municipalities in Nepal to strengthen building code compliance. In districts affected by the April 2015 earthquake, approximately 1,500 BCIPN-compliant buildings have been constructed since 2013—or half of all new buildings during that period; no building code compliant buildings collapsed during the earthquake.